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Written on June 1, 2016 at 11:00 am by [Navy Medicine](#)

## What's a guy to eat?

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*By Cmdr. Paul Allen, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Registered Dietitian Nutritionist*



160520-N-GZ984-009 Portsmouth, Va. (May 20, 2016) Cmdr. Paul Allen, a registered dietitian nutritionist at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, shares his recommendations on wellness in support of Men's Health Month. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Terah L. Bryant/Released)

Happy Men's Health Month! Let's talk about something we all do...eat. Food is all around us. We pass fast food places on the way to work. We take our family out. Food is everywhere and it's easy to get.

This easiness may not be very beneficial to our health. Rates of preventable disease are rising directly alongside the use of medications needed to fix conditions that many health professionals would say are preventable and reversible.

Of the top ten causes of death in men, heart disease and cancer account for nearly half of all deaths, 24.6% and 23.5% respectively, according to the Centers for Disease Control. So what gives? What do we do to fix this?

The answer is not that simple. My guess is you've heard to eat more fruits and vegetables, to cut down on red meat or eat less overall. But how well do we really heed this advice? Are we too busy to prevent a potential disease?

Do a quick food inventory of what you ate this morning for breakfast. Look in your pantry at home. What food do you keep in your desk? Stash in your car? What are your go-to foods or places for food?

Our food habits are habits. They are mindless choices that can be very destructive to your health. Food should be your medicine to prevent disease – not to cause it.

So, now you know what food is around you, it's time to come up with a plan. Fighting our weight, protecting against a first heart attack, or preventing cancer takes a strong, knowledgeable competitor. I'm

here to equip you with tips that can help you win:

1. Make rules when it comes to eating. Avoid processed foods. No bagged food, yep that means fast food. Skip sugar, salt, fried sides and sodas. Increase your colors: eat fresh green vegetables and add some red strawberries to your breakfast meal.
2. Ask yourself what's missing from your current diet to make it healthy. Are you really eating all your vegetables, three to five cups a day? Can you add some baby carrots or sliced peppers to your lunch? Are you buying whole grain options in your breads, brown rice and grain cereals? That cancer thing loves it when we don't eat fiber.
3. Cut down on portions. Right behind not making healthy food choices as a cause for disease, is our weight. Males with a greater weight get cancer at higher levels and die of heart disease more often and at younger ages.

So, what is a guy to do? Do something! Ditch the soda. Stop eating hot dogs. Limit cheese. Eat an extra piece of fruit. Add some almonds to your diet. Have a bigger salad. Oh, I almost forgot, get moving! Exercise can reduce our weight, and get our hearts stronger!

The time is now. Eat better for your health. Eat better for your family. They need you. You need you. Win the war on your health. Make the easy choice, the healthy choice.

For more information, please check out these helpful sites: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov), [www.cdc.gov/healthyweight](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight) and [www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Operation-Live-Well](http://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Operation-Live-Well).

Cmdr. Paul Allen is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, loves running, bananas, peanut butter, bell peppers and granola!

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